

# SAMOAN HOUSE BUILDING, COOKING, AND TATTOOING

BY

E. S. CRAIGHILL HANDY

AND

WILLOWDEAN CHATTERSON HANDY

BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM  
BULLETIN 15

HONOLULU, HAWAII  
PUBLISHED BY THE MUSEUM  
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BY

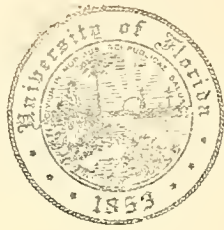
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# SAMOAN HOUSE BUILDING, COOKING, AND TATTOOING

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By E. S. CRAIGHILL HANDY and WILLOWDEAN C. HANDY

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## . INTRODUCTION

So unaltered by European civilization are many of the native crafts and customs of Samoa that even a short visit to Tutuila and Upolu in 1923 offered exceptional opportunities for ethnological research. The facility with which a contemporary culture may be observed and described was augmented by the aid of a friendly chief, Le Au Pepe of Fasitoo Uta, who summoned from his people the natives whom we wished to question about their various professions. Practices which we had not found in operation on our chance visits here and there, he caused to be demonstrated for us. Of the notes accumulated, those on house forms and house building, on cooking, and on tattooing seem to make pictures complete enough to warrant publication.

Samoa tattooing presents not so much of artistic as of ethnologic interest, for it is a striking example of the conventionalization of a native art which seems to have preserved its stereotyped form and adhered to its laws of practice for generations unnumbered. As it was in the beginning, it apparently is now.

Life is still vital enough for these islanders to make the heavy labor entailed in the traditional preparation of native foods seem worth while. Fruits, tubers, and leaves are still sought in the uplands, and the ancestral dishes are still relished. Every member of each family has some part in these labors and every one is an artist, deft fingers making beautiful the simplest process of food preparation. The use of modern canned goods has made but little progress.

It may be said with confidence that nowhere in Polynesia today is the opportunity for studying native house building better than in Samoa. With the same admirable tenacity shown in maintaining their own mode of social and political life, the natives of this island group continue to prefer their own form of dwelling, and wisely, for it combines perfect adaptation to environment with simplicity and beauty of fine craftsmanship.



An elaborate dwelling or council house of a chief—all its parts carefully cut and fitted and tied with brilliant vari-colored ornamental sennit lashings, its beams polished or varnished—is a true work of art, worthy of a guild whose ideals of perfection have been passed down from generation to generation through many centuries.

During our stay, a number of houses in various stages of construction were examined, and four complete houses were studied. With Tiafu as interpreter, many details were obtained from a *tufunga* living at Apia. Other information and assistance in checking up notes were generously given by one who is a prime authority on all questions relating to the culture of the people of his islands, Mr. O. F. Nelson, of Apia, who has recently completed the construction of a handsome native dwelling on his estate near Apia. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to Mr. A. J. Tattersall, of Apia, for permission to use two photographs of Samoan houses.

In the spelling of Samoan words throughout this paper, *ng* is used for the *ng* sound, which is distinctly heard today. In the accepted orthography adopted for convenience by the missionaries who originally redacted the language, *ng* is represented by *g*, but the full spelling furnishes a better basis for comparison of the Samoan terminology with that of other Polynesian peoples. For convenience of reference the terms used by builders have been arranged in an alphabetical list (pp. 17-18).

## SAMOAN HOUSE FORMS AND HOUSE BUILDING

BY E. S. CRAIGHILL HANDY

### THE LONG HOUSE

On Upolu, Samoa, two forms of houses are nowadays constructed by the natives: the long house (*afo lau*) (Pl. I, *A*) and the round house (*fale tele*) (Pl. I, *B*). Both have the following general characteristics in common: a high, steeply pitched roof thatched with sugar-cane leaves, sloping to within four or five feet of the ground on all sides, and supported all the way around by small posts; the spaces between these posts open save for coconut leaf screens, which may be let down in time of wind and rain; rounded ends; and a straight section of roof on each side. The distinguishing features of the two forms are: the long house has long side roofs supported by two lines of heavy posts inside the house; the round house has such short straight sections as to give it the appearance of being perfectly round, the roof as a whole being supported mainly by two or three long, heavy center posts rising from the middle of the floor to the short ridge pole.



The carpenter's outfit used today in the construction of houses, as well as canoes, consists of heavy adzes (*to'i*), made most commonly by lashing a hatchet head at right angles to the end of a crooked stick; light adzes, made with a piece of flat steel cut to the desired shape and sharpened on the lower side; an adz with a curved blade (*sila*), made of a large gouge hafted, or of a piece of steel bent to the desired shape and sharpened; chisels; and gouges. Saws are not used. The trees in the forests are felled with axes, but are trimmed down with adzes.

The order of procedure in constructing a long house is as follows:

1. The materials for the house are collected in the forest: all the young male friends of the housebuilder are called together to go with the carpenter (*tufunga fa'i fale*), who selects the trees to be felled. The party seeking timber (called collectively the *fata mango*) must be feasted by the housebuilder during the gathering of materials. It is only the hard wood that is sought at this time—the ifi lele (*Apselia bijuga*) and the pou muli. The softer woods, breadfruit and coconut, are obtained from the plantations near the villages, though only trees that have served their time as fruit bearers are taken. Posts and timbers are trimmed and roughed out near the place of felling. The roughhewn timber is then carried by the men on their shoulders to the site chosen for the house, or, if the pieces are very heavy they are dragged to their destination by the workers. It is evident that the carpenter in charge must work out in advance with some degree of exactness the dimensions of the house and its parts. There are no standard proportions, the relative sizes of parts being determined by the owner and the chief carpenter.

2. A scaffolding (*fata manu*) is erected at the house site: two inverted V's, made each of two rough timbers lashed together at the top, are placed one at each end of the proposed house and are held in position by a series of poles bound along the sides of the V's (Pl. IV, *A*). Supplementary V's are added according to the size of the structure. This framework is of such height and width as to allow the roof to be built above it, and serves two purposes: bracing the main posts, the frame, and the central section of the roof of the house during the first stage of construction; and acting as a scaffold on which the workers stand to lash the rafters, ribs, and thatch into place.

3. The heavy main posts (*pou tu*) (P. III, *A*; fig. 1, *a*, 1), made of breadfruit wood, ifi lele, or pou muli, are now put in place in holes in the ground and held in position by being lashed to the scaffolding.

4. On top of the main posts are lashed two main plates (*amo pou*) of breadfruit wood, which run the length of the straight section of the

roof (Pls. II, *D*; III, *A*; and fig. 1, *a*, 2) and are fitted to the main posts in the manner shown in figure 3, *a*; 3, *b*; or 3, *c*.

5. The *utu poto*, heavy crossbeams or joists of breadfruit wood, are next placed on top of the plates at right angles to them and lashed into place, so that they lie across the top ends of the pairs of opposite main

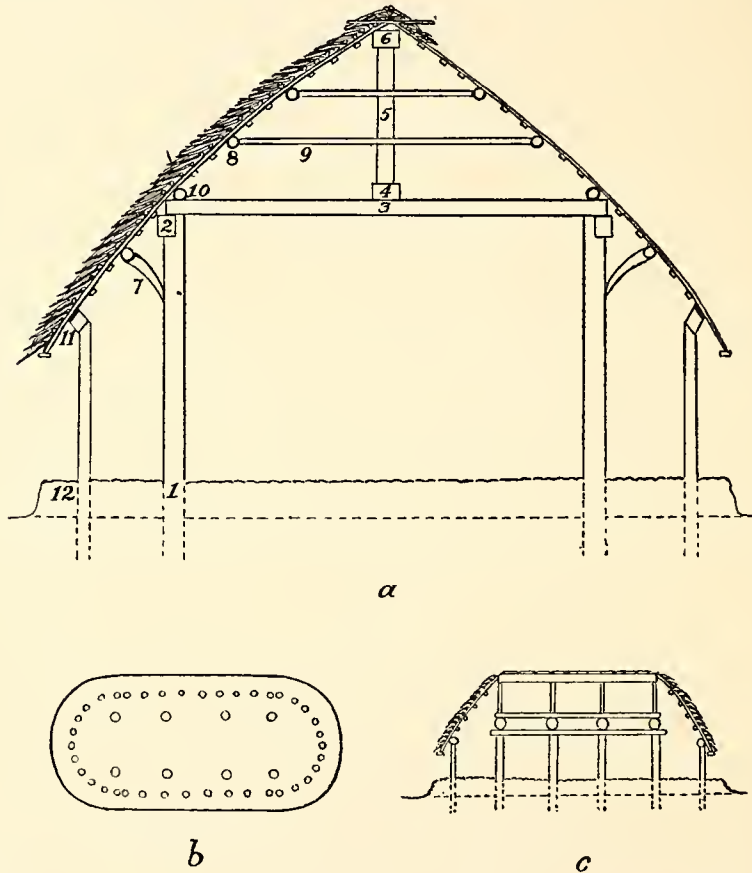


FIGURE 1.—Construction of the Samoan long house: *a*, a latitudinal cross-section; *b*, the ground plan; *c*, a longitudinal cross-section.

posts. The joists and plates are never of the same material as the main posts. (See Pl. III, *A*, and fig. 1, *a*, 3.)

6. On top of the crossbeams and equidistant from their ends is next placed a heavy longitudinal beam called *tuitui*, running the length of the frame. This is made of *ifi lele*. (See Pl. III, *A*, and fig. 1, *a*, 4.)

7. Upon the *tuitui*, at the points immediately above its intersection with the crossbeams, are now lashed uprights (*te'e auau*), rising to support the ridge pole (*auau*), which is next lashed into place. This superstructure of uprights and ridge pole is held in place by hand and small braces until side braces attached to the ridge pole and the main posts have been put up. For the ridge pole *ifi lele* wood is commonly used. (See Pl. II, *B*, and fig. 1, *a*, 5, 6.)

8. Next are lashed into place the *fatunga*—flat, oblique rafters or braces made of coconut wood—running from the ridge pole across the end of each main post. These extend from the ridge pole, across the main plates, and as low as the eave of the house will come. These oblique rafters, which hold in position the superstructure above mentioned, are distinguished from the horizontal rafters by being made of coconut wood instead of breadfruit, by being flat instead of round in cross section. (See Pl. II, *B* and *D*.)

9. On the outer side of the main posts, near the top, are fastened pairs of short braces (*te'e*), running to the *fatunga*. (See Pls. II, *D*; III, *A*; and fig. 1, *a*, 7.)

10. The *lango matua*, also called *ulu*—round horizontal rafters of breadfruit wood running the length of the roof—are next lashed beneath the *fatunga*. (See Pl. II, *D*; fig. 1, *a*, 8.)

11. Horizontal braces called *so'a*, running the width of the roof, are now lashed into place, so as to join opposite pairs of *lango matua* at the same level, one brace passing on each side of each *te'e auau* and being lashed at its middle point to this upright. (See Pl. II, *B*, and fig. 1, *a*, 9.)

12. When all of these horizontal rafters are in place, the *taotao*, two rafters lashed on top of the oblique rafters (*fatunga*) just over the main plates, are put up, one on each side. The small ribs to which the thatching is lashed rest on these and the other horizontal rafters. (See Pl. II, *D*, and fig. 1, *a*, 10.)

13. Small oblique ribs (*aso*) are next lashed into place. They run from the crest of the roof to its lower margin. These long thin laths of breadfruit wood, cut entirely by hand, about an inch wide and half an inch thick, are placed about two inches apart so as to cover the whole frame. (See Pl. II, *A*.)

14. Small horizontal rods (*luanga*) of the same form as the *aso* are now lashed along the under side of the *aso*, parallel to the horizontal rafters, one, two, or three strips between each pair of large rafters. (See Pls. II, *B* and *C*.)

15. The *amo pou lalo*—a lower plate, diamond shaped or round in cross section—is now lashed to the oblique rafters on each side, about one foot from their lower extremities, that is, about one foot above the lower edge of the roof. (See Pl. III, *A*; fig. 1, *a*, 11.)

16. The small outside posts (*pou lolo*), which run along the sides the entire length of the roof, are now put in place. They are made of ifi lele, pou muli, or breadfruit wood, and are planted in holes in the ground; their tops are then fitted to the lower plate after the manner shown in figure 1, *a*. (See also Pl. III, *A*.) The thatch is now put on this central section.

The main body, or central section, of the house, comprising two straight sections of side roof supported by two rows of main pillars and two rows of low outside pillars, is now complete. (See Pl. I, *D*.)

17. The two curved end segments are next erected. The round rafters (*fau*), which constitute the main elements of the end roofs, are made of straight breadfruit logs adzed to the right curvature. To produce the desired length, the sections of wood are fitted together after the manner shown in figure 3, *d*, by means of a spliced juncture, called *so'o*. These rafters appear usually to be shaped with adzes at the site of the house. First one end of the house is added to the central section, then the other.

18. The first element of the end to be placed in position is the curved end plate (*fau lalo*), which is supported on a semicircle of four low temporary end posts, which merely rest on the ground. (See Pl. II, *A*.)

19. Next is put into position the *fau tu*—the longest of the curved end rafters, that which runs from side to side of the frame and ends at the points of juncture of the lower side plates and the end plates. (See Pl. III, *A*.) This and the succeeding curved rafters, are temporarily held in place by small braces.

20. The next of the curved rafters to be put into position is the *fau tele aso*, the shortest and one nearest the ridge pole. After this, the one intermediate between the *fau lalo* and the *fau tu* is put up. The remainder of the rafters, collectively known as *fau*, but each with a special name descriptive of its position, are put into place alternating in order above and below the *fau tu*.

21. All the rafters of the end being in place and held in position by small temporary braces, the *moamoa* is lashed securely to the end of the ridge pole with many turns of sennit. The *moamoa* is a small, flat, rectangular or roundish block of wood; many are carved in symbolic representation of the moon and stars. The one observed is round and on its



surface facing the floor is a design in relief consisting of a row of three isosceles triangles with their bases touching.

22. To the *moamoa* are now lashed five *aso*, which pass across the curved rafters to the top of the middle end post, which is now put up and lashed to the *fau lalo*; and the five *aso* are lashed also to the newly erected post. After this work is finished, all of the *aso* are put into place just as they were on the side roofs (p. 7, § 13).

23. The *aso* being in place, *luanga* are lashed under them, one, two or three strips between each pair of large curved rafters, as in the construction of the straight sections of the roof (p. 7, § 14). (See Pls. II, B; III, A.)

24. The rest of the semicircle of low end pillars (*pou lalo*) are next put into place, being planted in holes and lashed to the curved end plate.

25. To complete the frame of the end, small poles called *lango lau*, square or rectangular in cross section and about two inches thick, are lashed along the lower ends of the *aso*, making a continuous rod binding their extremities all the way around the house.

26. The thatching of each end section is put on as the frame is finished—that is to say, each end is completed, including thatching, as a separate unit, first one, then the other. The lashing of the elements of the thatch on the frame is done by men, but the elements themselves are made by women in the following manner:

A sufficient supply of leaves of the sugar-cane (*lau*) is gathered and dried by the women. Dry reed stems (*lafo*) from the swamps, and a sufficient number of dry midribs of coconut leaflets are also collected. The basis of the thatch element is a reed stem about three feet long. Beginning at one end of the reed, sugar-cane leaves, one after the other, are doubled over it along its entire length and made fast by means of a coconut midrib which is thrust close to the reed stem through the half leaves as a pin. The elements of thatch thus made are from two and a half to three feet long, with the loose halves of the sugar-cane leaves hanging as a fringe from the reed on one side. In British Samoa women are paid one pound sterling a hundred pieces for making them. These thatch elements are lashed on the house frame one above another as closely as can be laid in successive strips or sections from the eaves up to the ridge, one row being finished before the next is started. One row from eaves to ridge is called an *ine'i lau*.<sup>1</sup> The small sennit cords that hold these thatch

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<sup>1</sup> There is a native saying applied to anyone who cannot complete what he starts: *E le au lau ine'i lau*, "His row of thatch does not reach."

elements are laced and tied over the *aso* and *luanga*. The crest of the roof above the ridge pole is covered with loose coconut leaves, on top of which are placed several layers of coconut leaf mats. This covering,

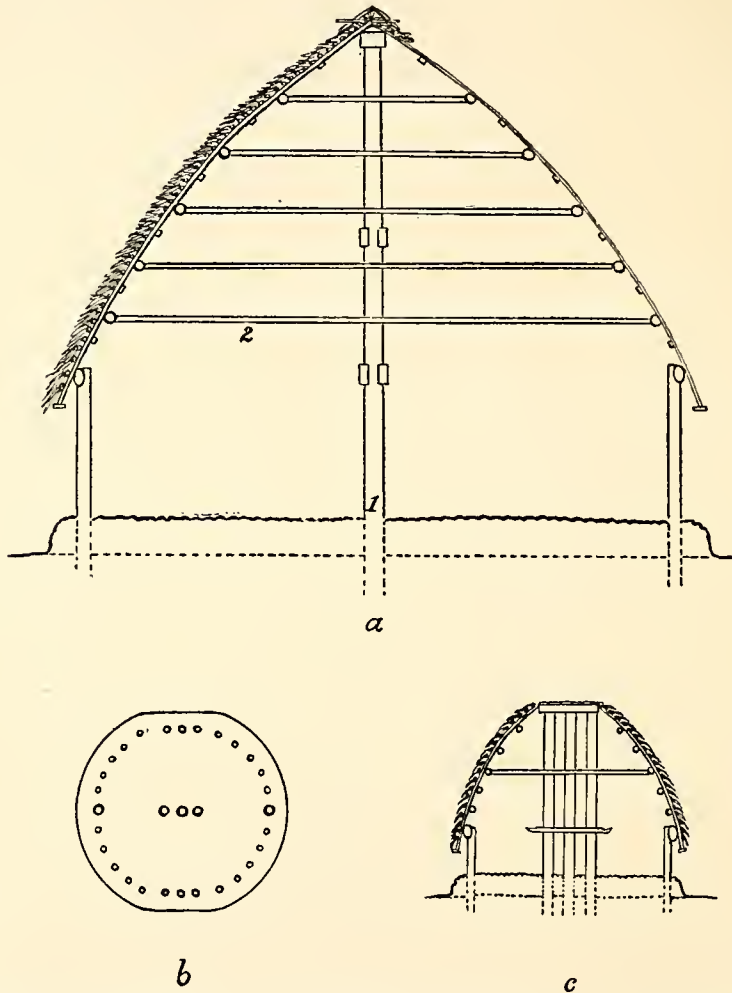


FIGURE 2.—Construction of the Samoan round house: *a*, a latitudinal cross-section; *b*, the ground plan; *c*, a longitudinal cross-section.

which runs the length of the ridge, is held in place by small sticks thrust through from side to side, binding the crest mats to the upper row of sugar-cane thatch elements. The thatching of the ridge is called *taua lunga*. The final stage of the thatching is the trimming of the thatch at the eaves (*tulutulu*).

27. Coconut leaf screens are used to close the sides of the house in inclement weather (Pl. III, *A*): Small mats about 18 inches wide and made of coconut leaves cut to the required length are woven by gathering all the leaflets of a section on one side of the midrib and braiding them together in a check pattern with now and then a variant row of twilled strokes. The leaflets are turned back at the ends of the mat and woven in as new dextrals or sinistrals; while the edge opposite the midrib is finished with a three-ply braid of the pendant leaflets. A number of these single mat elements sufficient to fill the space between the lower plates and the ground are suspended from the plate, one above the other and slightly overlapping. About the top margin of the uppermost mat are tied two long cords, one near either end, which are successively tied to the tops of the mats below. Another cord is then tied to the middle of the lowest mat and passed through a hole in the upper margin of each successive mat above, then thrown over the plate, its end hanging free. When it is desired to raise the screen, the loose end of the cord is pulled, so that the overlapping mats are drawn up one on top of the other and held in a compact bundle under the eave. The end of the pulling cord is fastened around one of the side posts.

28. The stone platform and the pebble floor of the house are laid after the house itself is completed. Most platforms (*paepae ma'a*) consist of only one layer of roundish stones (*ma'a*) about two feet deep, covering the ground beneath the house and extending very slightly, if at all, beyond the eaves. If the house is not on level ground, the platform may be much higher on one side than the other. Plate IV, *C* shows a picture of the largest *paepae ma'a* observed—the former site of a chief's house. The borders of some platforms slope, consisting merely of boulders grading down to the ground at an angle. Or the border may be finished with a vertical curbing of squared coral blocks (*si'osi ma'a*). Today many curbings are made of concrete.

29. A floor (*fola*) of black pebbles (*ilili*) or of finely broken coral covers evenly the stones of the platform. For sitting, sleeping, and domestic activities, mats are unrolled and spread. Long, narrow mats made of broad strips of pandanus leaf, sufficient in number to cover the whole floor, are kept in each house.

#### THE ROUND HOUSE

Instead of having the two lines of main posts on either side as does the long house, the round house (Pl. I, *B*, fig. 2) has two or three tall, heavy posts (*pou tu*) in the center supporting the short ridge pole (Pl.



IV, *B*, fig. 2, *a*, 1). With the exception of this feature of the main post, the construction of the round house is the same as that of the long house. The straight section of side roof is so short, however, that the house consists of two large, high, rounded end roofs joined by a few feet of straight side roof, the resultant structure being apparently perfectly round.

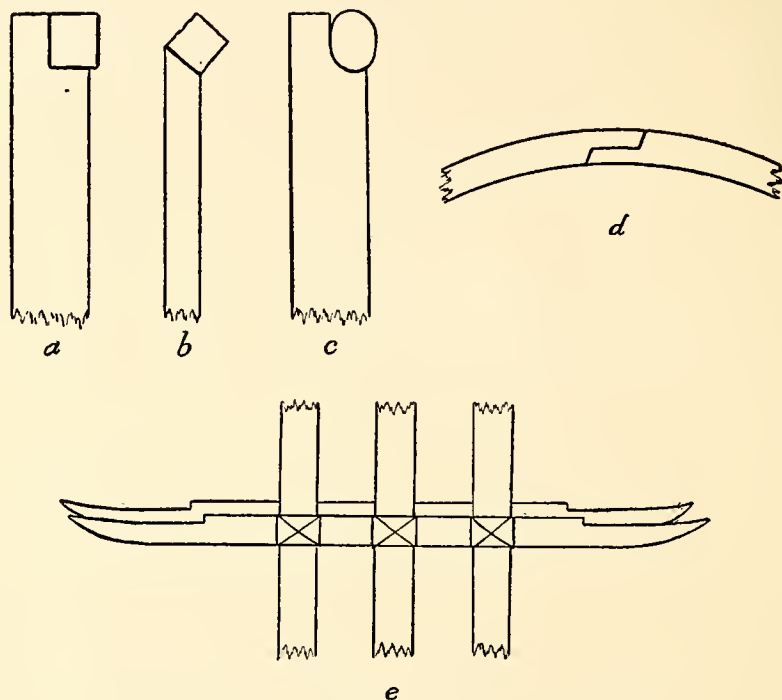


FIGURE 3.—Details of house construction: *a*, a squared beam fitted into a square notch in a post; *b*, a squared beam fitted on the beveled end of a post; *c*, a rounded beam fitted into a round notch in a post; *d*, the splicing of butts where sections of curved rafters are joined; *e*, the attachment of racks called *talitali* on either side of the center posts of the round house.

Though they vary in relative size, the structural parts of the long house and of the round house are the same, with the exception of the following features:

1. In the round house, the straight horizontal rafters of the short side of the roof are called *la'au faa lava*. (Cf. p. 7, § 10.)

2. In the round house examined at Molinu'u, which has three center posts, braces attached to these rafters run the width of the house (Pl. IV, *B*, and fig. 2, *a*, 2): a brace (*so'a*) passes on either side of the middle post, and another brace passes on the outer side of each of the other two,

making four braces at each level. In this house are nine levels of these braces, one set of four running between each opposite pair of *laau faa lava*.

3. Almost midway up the roof of the round house two braces (*te'e tala*) run at right angles to the *so'a* described in paragraph above, one passing along either side of the center posts and being lashed to them. At both ends these are lashed to the *fau tu* (p. 8, § 20), and short braces (*te'e*) run obliquely upward at either end, as shown in Plate IV, *B*.

4. Bound on either side of the center posts of the round house, six or seven feet from the floor and running lengthways with the house, are the *talitali*, two pieces of wood which serve as racks, cut in the form shown in figure 3, *c*. Baskets of food are hung here at the time of feasts, and mats and bamboo pillows are placed on their tops. In one long house examined—one used as a meeting house—are several pairs of these racks on the rear main posts.

5. The two chief posts at either end of a round house and the one at the front side have special names. The end posts are called *tala* or *matua tala* and serve as the back rests of the two highest chiefs present at a meeting. The middle post on the front side (*tala luma* or *pou tala luma*) is also important, as here sits the next ranking chief, or the chief boy (?) or the chief girl (?) present at the function. The middle side post, *tua*, at the back of the house (houses are parallel with the road) (Pl. IV, *D*) is the place of the *taupo*, or village maiden, who prepares and serves the *kava* at all public functions. The remainder of the side posts, *pou lalo*, are the seats of lesser chiefs and orators. (An orator sits on either side of the presiding high chiefs at a formal function.)

6. In building a round house a scaffolding is erected (p. 5, § 2); next, the center posts are planted in the ground and braced by being lashed to the frame; then the ridge pole is put on top of the center posts. The short sections of the side roof are now built just as are the side roofs of the long house, except that the frame is held in place by the cross braces called *so'a* and by temporary braces lashed to the *fata manu* until the lower plate is attached and the side posts are put up. (See Pl. IV, *A*.) The end sections are constructed exactly as in the long house.

#### SENNIT LASHINGS

The ornamental sennit (*afa*) lashings, colored the natural brown, yellow, red, purple, and black (much of it nowadays with commercial paint or dyes) are very beautiful and are put on in patterns with the greatest precision, the sennit strands used in this fine work being made with care to produce regularity and smoothness. The beauty of this

work can be little more than suggested by photographic reproduction. (See Pl. III, *A* and *B*.) The sennit work is done by the craftsmen who construct the rest of the dwelling. The process of binding is spoken of as *fa'a fai* (to bind together), or *fafau* (make fast); and the making of the ornamental lashings is referred to as *faa fau faa mangaia* (*mangaia*, beautiful). Ornamental lashings themselves are spoken of as *faa mangaia*.

#### FEASTS

The giving of feasts for the *tufunga* and his helpers, with the accompanying presentation of gifts, constitutes the conventional mode of payment of the builders by the owner. Every important stage in the erection of the house is marked by a feast. One is held in the forest when the materials are gathered; one, at the site of the house when the materials are all assembled. Feasts mark the erection of the main posts, the placing of the ridge pole, of the middle end posts, and so on.

When the house has been completed, the most important of all the feasts is celebrated, that called the *umu sanga*, or consecration feast (*umu*, oven; *sa*, sacred). An abundance of food is distributed, there is a formal kava drinking with speeches appropriate to the occasion, and presentation of gifts. The most interesting feature of the rite is the prayer of consecration addressed to the whole company of house building *tufunga*, living and dead, supplicating their blessing on the product of handicraft just accomplished, and to the ancestral spirits of the family, requesting that the unity and prestige of the family be supported. This rite, which today is always practised upon the completion of an important new house, is a purely Samoan ceremony; the local pastor does not assist and no Christian prayer is said. After this consecration feast, all the building *tufunga* depart.

A function called *faa ulu falenga* (entering the house), which may be referred to as the "housewarming," although quite distinct from the "consecration," is sometimes combined with it; but usually for important buildings, the housewarming is celebrated a year or two after the completion and consecration of the building. The ceremony consists of feasting and merrymaking without the formal elements of the consecration rite. There is no kava drinking, no speech making, no praying.

#### USES

The family sleeping or dwelling house (*fale tofá*) is commonly a small, or medium-sized, *afo lau*; the public rest house (*fale tali malo*) in the village is a large house also of the long type; and sometimes the *afo lau*

serves as the chief's council house. When thus used the two end posts and the middle side post in front are called by the same terms as in the *fale tele* or true council house.

The chief's council house is properly of the round type with center posts. The term *fale tele* is applied both to its form and to its use. This form of house is also often built for the village maiden to stay in with the rest of the unmarried maids of the town.

#### FURNITURE

The furniture of a Samoan house is of the simplest kind. Coarse pandanus mats (*fola*) about a yard wide and of varying lengths are unrolled to cover the floor while the house is occupied, but are kept rolled up when not in use. There are large sleeping mats (*moenga*) woven of fine strips of pandanus. The bamboo pillows (*ali*) (Pl. III, *B*) and large sheets of bark cloth (*siapo*), suspended at times to cut off a section of the house, complete the furnishings.

#### CARPENTERS' GUILD

The accepted professional housebuilder is called *tufunga fa'i fale*. When a large structure is erected, a number of carpenters work under the direction of an old master who is referred to as *matai tufunga* (*matai*, director).

The profession is hereditary, but the training must come through serving an apprenticeship under a *tufunga*. When a young man has shown himself to be an acceptably skilled worker, he becomes a *tufunga* through election to one of the societies of carpenters. Thereafter, in the practice of his profession, the carpenter is known by the name of his society. Whether he be chief or common man at home, it is under his professional name, and only with its prerogatives, that he is served kava and takes part in public functions.

Every *tufunga fa'i fale* is a member of the carpenters' guild called collectively *ainga*, or more properly *ainga sa le Malama*. Anciently, Malama, the progenitor of one of the Samoan chiefly lines, is said to have founded this guild. There are four societies of major rank in the guild and others of less importance. The Solofuti and Longo are two of those of highest rank. The names of others were not ascertained. The rank of each society depends upon its genealogical relationship to the original society founded by Malama: thus, the first societies constituting the guild when founded are of first order, while other independent branches subsequently formed are of lower rank. The professional rank of an individual



member depends upon two things: the rank of his society; and the number of generations in direct line that his professional ancestry runs. A *tufunga* whose forefathers have been carpenters since the first founding of the guild, one whose professional descent is direct, holds the highest rank among carpenters.

Each society has a head, *matai tufunga*, chosen for this position because of rank and ability, who presides at meetings and superintends the erection of important structures. Among the most important of the meetings are those at which a new *tufunga* is admitted. At this meeting, which is attended by the leading carpenters of the society from each district, the newly accepted carpenter presents fine mats, cloth, or other valuable gifts to the older *tufunga* whose apprentice he has been. If a *tufunga* of higher rank is present at the meeting, the sponsor for the apprentice will probably defer in his favor. But the *tufunga* who happens to be of higher rank will usually, with the customary graceful oratory, accept the courtesy but refuse the gifts, insisting that they be presented to him in whose honor the feast is really given, the carpenter under whom the new member has received his training. There is much speech making and kava drinking and afterwards a feast. Such an occasion usually marks the successful completion of some large building by the young carpenter, who has thus demonstrated to his preceptor and to the world proficiency in his profession. There is no testing or examination; the house that he has completed stands as evidence of his qualifications. The new member thereafter assumes, in his professional capacity, the name of his society. This is his only title; there are no individual titles.

A head carpenter may employ a *tufunga* of another society. For example: suppose a *tufunga* has a relative who is erecting a house and he desires to help him, but a head carpenter of another society has been put in charge of the work. The *tufunga* will work with the carpenters of the other society; but he will be associated with them without rank, having none of the prerogatives that belong to his title in his own society.

Formerly the societies were localized, each being attached to one of the superior chiefs, but nowadays, with the population shifting about more than in ancient times, the members are becoming more and more scattered.

An interesting recent event shows that at times the guild acts as a unit and illustrates graphically the control of economic factors in native affairs. Among the provisions which must be supplied at the feasts nowadays are kegs of salt beef. Money has to be paid for these and

also for many parts of the house, such as the thatching; but the cost of trade articles has increased and the income of natives from copra and other produce has decreased to such an extent since the War that even those of wealth find the number of feasts required by custom to be burdensome, if not prohibitive. There grew a general feeling of protest, which was doubtless frequently voiced upon those occasions when house-builders were arranging for the erection of a new dwelling. No carpenter or society dared to diverge from the established order of things, and the result was that fewer houses were built, and little employment for carpenters resulted. To discuss this situation the guild met as a whole, representatives coming from all the societies in all the islands. At this grand conclave it was decided that certain of the established feasts should be omitted for the time being, and as a result families found themselves better able to bear the expense of building, and trade soon revived.

The carpenter's profession has from time immemorial been highly honored; the carpenter has always been referred to as the *angai o tupu*, "the supporter of chiefs." According to Mr. O. F. Nelson, a high chief who kindly gave me most of this information regarding the guild, the carpenter was the most trusted and the most honored of the attendants of the chief.

The different societies have each their particular ornamental sennit designs used in lashing. On entering a house one familiar with these designs instantly recognizes which society has been in charge of the construction. If a prominent *tufunga* of another society is assisting a *matai* in building, thus sacrificing his prerogatives and rank, the *matai* will often pay him the graceful compliment of requesting him to apply one of the lashings of his society in one of the prominent positions. This honor accepted, the lashing stands as a lasting memento of the participation of the member of the other society.

#### TERMS USED IN HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

*afa*, sennit.

*afo lau*, long house.

*ainga* or *ainga sa le Malama*, carpenters' guild.

*ali*, bamboo pillow.

*amo pou*, main plate.

*amo pou lalo*, lower plate.

*aso*, oblique ribs or laths.

*au*, adz handle made of orange wood.

*auau*, ridge pole.

*faa fa'i* or *faa fau*, to bind with sennit.

*faa fau faa mangaia*, to make ornamental lashings.

*faa mangaia*, ornamental lashings.

faa ulu falenga, house warming.  
fale tali malō, public rest house.  
fale tele, round house or council house.  
fale tofā, sleeping house.  
fatunga, flat, oblique rafters.  
fau, round, curved end rafters.  
fau lalo, curved end plate.  
fau sanga, adz lashing.  
fau tele aso, the shortest curved end rafter.  
fau tonu, adz head.  
fau tu, the longest curved end rafter.  
fola, floor or floor mat.  
ilili, pebbles on the floor.  
ine'i lau, one row of thatch.  
lafo, reed stem used in making thatch mats.  
la'au faa lava, straight, round, horizontal rafters in the round house.  
lango lau, binding rods.  
lau, sugar cane leaves or thatch mat.  
lango matua or ulu, straight, round, horizontal rafters in the long house.  
luanga, horizontal rods.  
ma'a, stones used in making platforms.  
matai tufunga, head of a society, director.  
moamoa, block at either end of the ridge pole.  
moenga, sleeping mat.  
paepae ma'a, stone platform.  
pou lalo, small outside posts.  
pou tu, main posts.  
siapo, bark cloth hanging or partition.  
sila, adz blade.  
si'osi ma'a, curbing of squared coral blocks.  
so'a, horizontal braces.  
so'o, beveled juncture of sections of rafters.  
tala or matua tala, end posts in the round house.  
tala luma or pou tala luma, middle front post of the round house.  
talitali, racks.  
taotao, round horizontal rafter above the main plate.  
taua lunga, coconut leaf thatch on the crest of the roof.  
te'e, side braces or oblique braces.  
te'e auau, uprights supporting the ridge pole in the long house.  
te'e tala, horizontal longitudinal braces.  
to'i, adz.  
tua, middle back post of the round house.  
tufunga fa'i fale, carpenter.  
tuitui, longitudinal beam.  
tulutulu, eaves.  
umu sanga, consecration feast.  
utu poto, crossbeams or joists.



## THE SAMOAN COOKING DAY

BY WILLOWDEAN CHATTERSON HANDY

Spending Friday afternoon and Saturday morning of any week in the cook houses of such a village as Fasitoo Uta will acquaint one with the menus of the current season of the year and with the general methods of Samoan cooking. On Friday preparations are made for the great cooking time of the week. The men go to the bush for talo (*Colocasia antiquorum*), yams, breadfruit, bananas, and in season ifi (*Inocarpus edulis*). The women go for firewood, breadfruit, and for banana leaves for wrappings. By dusk cook houses are stacked with baskets of edibles and neat bundles of leaves and wood; and early Saturday morning smoke is pouring forth. All the young hands in the village are busy with the provender. Those delegated to fish start towards the reef in canoes with

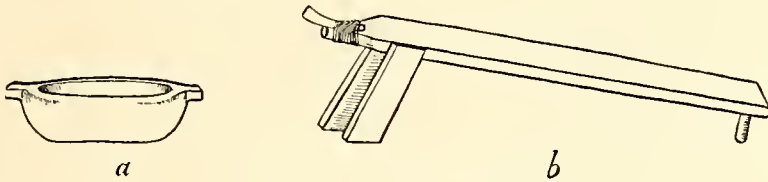


FIGURE 4. Samoan cooking utensils: *a*, a wooden bowl (*tanoa*); *b*, a coconut grater (*tuai*).

spears and window boxes for looking under the water, or take their nets to throw in the shallows off shore, and are soon seen returning with their catch in baskets. Others bring in pigs swung head downwards in coconut leaf mats tied to carrying poles.

The food is baked in an umu built above ground, not in a hole, though the frequent rebuilding in the same spot and the subsequent raking away of the stones gradually wears a slight depression. Firewood is laid criss-cross upon the ground, the oven stones on top. When the wood is consumed and the stones are hot, they are raked apart to make room for the fruits to be placed among them. There seems to be an established order for filling the oven: breadfruit and talo in the center, peeled bananas around them, all three mingled with the stones (Pl. V, *B*), the pig on top with packages of fish and *palu sami*, or talo leaves, around it (Pl. V, *C*). When the food is thus hurriedly packed among the stones, the whole is covered with leaves of breadfruit and banana and any talo leaves which may have been left over, and finally with copra sacks (Pl. V, *D*). Samoans like their food green and slightly raw. The breadfruit chosen is just at the point of maturity, before it has begun to sweeten; the

bananas are green; and the oven is opened just an hour after packing, so that the meat is half-cooked.

Talo is both baked and boiled, and the leaves are prepared with coconut milk in the mixture called *palu sami* or *lu au*. No oven seems complete without several dozen packages of *palu sami*—"cabbage" it is now often called. While one boy makes the leaves ready, another extracts the coconut milk in the usual Polynesian fashion, grating the flesh on a *tuai* (fig. 4, *b*), and squeezing the milk through a bunch of shredded fiber, which catches the particles of meat and strains out the liquid. The stem of a certain wild banana is pounded out to form this fibrous sieve. The milk is squeezed into a *tanoa* or wooden bowl (fig. 4, *a*) containing a few small, hot stones to bring out the oil. Meanwhile the leaves are being prepared according to rule. From the neat pile of talo leaves one leaf is selected and placed face downwards on the palm of the left hand. While the right-hand fingers pinch off the tip of the leaf, the left breaks the midrib about an inch above the stem. Thereupon the right hand pinches out the butt end of the midrib from this break to the end of the stem and throws it away. The two lower lobes of the leaf are now torn off and the three sections resulting are placed on the pile ready for filling with the coconut milk. The whole process is so rapid as to be difficult to follow with the eye.

The coconut milk being prepared in the *tanoa* and mixed with sea water, and the leaf sections being ready, the two workers together now complete the making of the packages: one selects half a dozen of the talo leaf sections and cups them in the palm of his left hand, dips a small coconut shell into the mixture of coconut milk and salt water, and pours a small quantity into the leaf cup. Gathering together the tips of the leaves and reinforcing them with a section of banana leaf, he hands the closed cup to the other worker, who has ready a pile of breadfruit leaves for the outside wrappers. Placing the bag at the base of the leaf, he gathers together the lower tips, folds in the side lobes, folds over the end of the leaf, and bends the stem up and tucks it under the midrib to fasten the package (Pl. V, *A*). The *palu sami* is now ready for the oven and when cooked is a soft pulp of leaves and coconut milk resembling well-cooked spinach.

Fish are cooked in leaf packages called *afi*, made in the following manner: a large breadfruit leaf is laid on the mat and three or four fish—depending upon their size—are placed near the stem. The sides of the leaf are turned in, the end folded over and bound to the stem in bag form with a strip of fau bark (*Paritium tiliaceum*).

Pig is cooked whole. When the hair has been scraped off and the entrails removed, it is stuffed with three hot stones and a bunch of leaves, preferably mango (*la vai*), which is supposed to sweeten the meat. The pig is then laid on its stomach on the hot stones of the oven.

Surplus crops of breadfruit, yams, bananas, and talo are stored in holes in the ground for possible need. The preserved foods are renewed yearly and are not eaten unless needed. Should an unproductive year arise, they are dug up and baked in leaf packages until hard and blackish, and are eaten without further treatment.

### SAMOAN TATTOOING

BY WILLOWDEAN CHATTERSON HANDY

Tattooing (*tatau*) is practised today in Samoa in the old native fashion, and far more generally; for, with the relaxation of ancient rigid laws of class distinction, designs which were once the exclusive possession of the chiefly class may be worn now by any man capable of paying for them. Formerly, commoners were pricked from waist to knees so as to make this portion of their bodies wholly black. An elaborate covering of bands and stripes (Pl. VI, *A* and *B*), the pattern of a modern middle-class Samoan, was restricted to persons of high rank. Even today, variations in certain motives proclaim rank to the initiated, such as the number of triangles down the back of a man's legs (Pl. VI, *B*, *o*), and the variant *aso tali tu* (Pl. VII, *B*, *c*, 2), which distinguishes a chief, whereas the same design in the form given in Plate VI, *B*, *j-m*, or Plate VII, *B*, *c*, 1, belongs to a bard, or "talking man," as it is translated today.

Beyond these small symbols, tattooing motives seem never to have possessed significance. The initial letter of a man's name, which nowadays is pricked upon his arm, is said to be there to distinguish him should he be killed in war. What the personal mark was—if there was one—before the introduction of the alphabet could not be ascertained. To the amount of tattooing an individual possesses is attached significance in the judgment of the fashionable Samoan world. Half a suit is of no importance, but if a man can show an *aso tali tu*, which begins the second half of the work, he is considered "all right." The small splotch put upon the navel (Pl. VI, *A*) is most important of all in this connection, as it is the last motive put on and stamps a man as altogether fashionable. The social importance of bearing with fortitude the whole

operation is illustrated by the experience of a young man which came under the notice of two United States naval officers who testify as follows<sup>2</sup>:

There was recently admitted to the Samoan hospital a young man who, when he was half tattooed, had refused to let the operator continue on account of the severe pain. It was an unfortunate thing for him, for he has been persecuted, jeered at, and his life made miserable ever since by the young men of his age. He came to the hospital with a feigned disease to escape his persecutors.

The art of tattooing is practised by adepts called *tufunga*. The office is sometimes hereditary, but not always. It is customary for young men to assist the *tufunga*. These are generally relatives, but not necessarily so. If an assistant shows promise and aptitude, the artist may encourage him to make a study of the designs and the practice with a view to becoming a professional. Eventually he is given the opportunity of putting on a suit of tattooing for some client of his master to whom it is agreeable. If he proves his ability, he becomes a candidate for admission into the guild of *tufunga tatau* to which his master belongs. Artists who are members of this particular organization—of which there are several in the islands—come from far and near to attend the initiation of the neophyte, who entertains them. If, in the opinion of these professionals, he is qualified to become a practitioner, he thereafter practises. It is said<sup>3</sup> that the fraternity of tattooers was in the old days presided over by two female deities—Tilafainga and Taema. Whether this refers to one of the societies or to tattooers as a whole I do not know.

Fathers are considered "mean" if they do not make it possible for their children to follow the fashion of tattooing, and everyone who can afford the rather expensive operation calls in a *tufunga* to decorate his boy or girl sometime before the eighteenth year. The father builds a special shed in which the work is done and which is burned upon its completion. He houses and feeds the artist and his family during the entire operation—about six months on an average—and pays him in fine mats, waist cloths (*lavalava*), and other articles of local value. The father allows his child to invite friends to come and share the skill of the practitioner. The boy or girl, for whom the artist is hired, sets the pace for the work, indicating when, because of pain, the work must stop, and stating the length of the rest periods. Usually there are work periods about three times a week. Some, it has been reported<sup>4</sup>, have such endur-

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<sup>2</sup> Hunt, D., and Humphreys, L., Samoan tattooing: U. S. N. Med. Bull., pp. 346-348, March, 1923.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit.



ance as to allow the entire operation to be completed in three or four days. The boys and girls invited to be decorated at the same time, however, may not have their patterns completed until that of the chief patron is finished.

The artist works with a set of six mallets (fig. 5, *b-f*, two of *d*). The handles are of bamboo or light wood (*le au*), to which are lashed heads

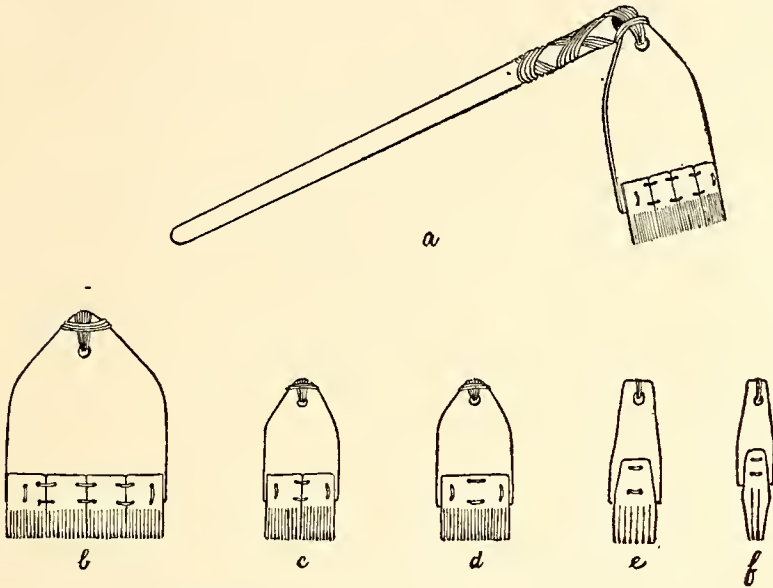


FIGURE 5. The instruments used in Samoan tattooing.

of tortoise-shell with attached flat combs of pig's teeth or of human bone (*a'u*). Hunt and Humphreys<sup>6</sup> report that these bones are made flat by grinding and rubbing with sea shells. Upon the fineness and number of the teeth depends the use to which the instrument is put and from which it derives its name. The largest instrument is called *kapulu* (fig. 5, *b*). To the handle, 10 inches long, is lashed a head  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches high by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide. Attached to this head are four combs of ten teeth each. The *kapulu* makes the large black patch on the outer thigh, which is also called *kapulu* (Pl. VI, *B*, *o*; Pl. VI, *A*, *j*). There are also three *songi aso*: one, shown in figure 5, *c*, has two combs each containing fine teeth, and is used for making long lines; two instruments like that shown in figure 5, *d*, each with one comb of twenty fine teeth, are used for making short lines. The instruments shown in figure 5, *e* and 5, *f*, are called *au mongo* and are used for making dotted edges—*e* for small ones, *f* for large ones. The

<sup>6</sup> Op cit.

head of each is about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches high, but *c* is five-eighths of an inch wide and bears a comb of seven coarse teeth, while *f* is three-eighths of an inch wide and has but three very coarse teeth.

The pigment used in tattooing is the soot of the *lama* nut (*Alcurites triloba*) mixed with water. The artist dips the teeth of his instrument into this fluid and, holding the mallet in his left hand, taps upon it with a slender stick about a foot long, driving the teeth into the skin of the client, which is held taut by an assistant. (See Pl. VII, *A*.) There seem never to have been fixed chants belonging exclusively to this operation, but during the entire process friends sit around singing to distract the mind of the sufferer.

An exhaustive study of Samoan tattooing should include a great many examples of the patterns, for, though they seem identical, the motives present many variations to the practised eye. It is said that those versed in the art, upon seeing a pattern, can name the artist who executed it. Such a study is impossible in the present paper, but drawings here presented of the tattooing on one native may be suggestive. Plate VI, *A* and *B* shows the typical leg covering for men. It appears that except for the hands this was the only portion of the body ever covered. The Samoan whose patterns are reproduced here described his motives in the terms given in the legend for Plate VI. It will be noticed that most of the motives are named for animate or inanimate objects, to which some resemblance may be traced in the general shape of the design, but the drawings can hardly be called naturalistic. The *ivi muku*, short bone, apparently takes its name from the part of the body it covers, the sacrum; the *fusi*, belt, from its function as a body covering, a belt about the knee.

The patterns worn by women are scant and dainty, their thighs being pricked with delicate marks which give the impression of polka dots or cut work embroidery. There are dots arranged in diamonds, wavy lines variously placed, and dashes radiating like spokes of a wheel (Pl. VII, *B*, *a*). Their hands are covered with a loose and scattered arrangement of dots, stars, wavy lines, inverted V's and W's (Pl. VII, *B*, *b*). Men's hands are decorated with the same delicate prickings.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATES

### PLATE I.—SAMOAN HOUSE FORMS AND CONSTRUCTION OF LONG HOUSE.

- A.* A long house at Molinu'u, Upolu.
- B.* A round house at Molinu'u.
- C.* The complete main frame of a long house.
- D.* Middle section of long house thatched, side posts and end sections to be added.

### PLATE II.—DETAILS OF CONSTRUCTION OF LONG HOUSE.

- A.* Frame of completed end section of a house, ribs exposed, ready to receive the thatch. (Photograph by A. J. Tattersall.)
- B.* Interior view showing beams, upright support and braces of ridge pole; juncture of side and end section of the roof, rafters and ribs.
- C.* Interior of the dwelling of Le Au Pepe, at Fasito'o Uta, Upolu, looking upward along the side roof to the ridge pole; showing ornamental lashings and braces.
- D.* Same as C, showing main posts, main plate, joists, central beam, braces, side and end rafters, and ribs.

### PLATE III.—INTERIOR VIEWS OF LONG HOUSE.

- A.* Interior of a common sleeping house. (Photographed by A. J. Tattersall.)
- B.* Ornamental lashings on joists in dwelling of Le Au Pepe.

### PLATE IV.—SAMOAN ROUND HOUSE AND GENERAL VIEWS.

- A.* Nearly complete middle section of a small round house with two center posts, showing the rough frame that supports the roof until the small side posts are put in place.
- B.* Interior view of the large round house at Molinu'u, showing the center posts, braces, section of the straight side and curved end walls and their juncture, and the rafters and ribs.
- C.* A very large stone platform which formerly served as the foundation of a great round house of a chief.
- D.* The village of Fasito'o Uta, showing the manner in which Samoan houses are placed parallel to the roadways.

### PLATE V.—SAMOAN COOKING.

- A.* Making palu sami.
- B.* The bottom layer of an oven: breadfruit, talo and bananas mingled with the hot stones.
- C.* The second layer of an oven: pig, and packages of palu sami.
- D.* The oven covered with leaves and sacks.

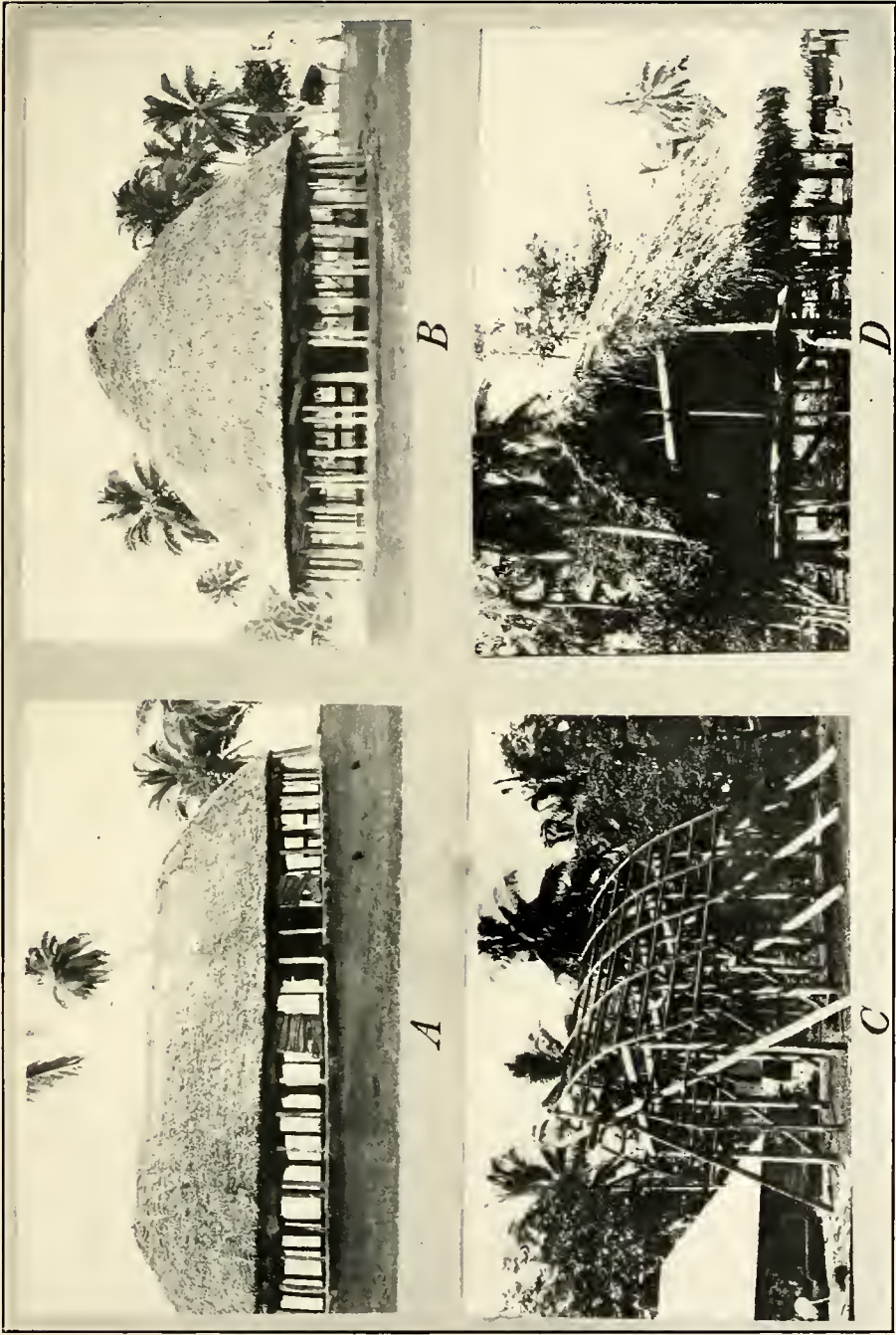


## PLATE VI.—SAMOAN TATTOOING DESIGNS.

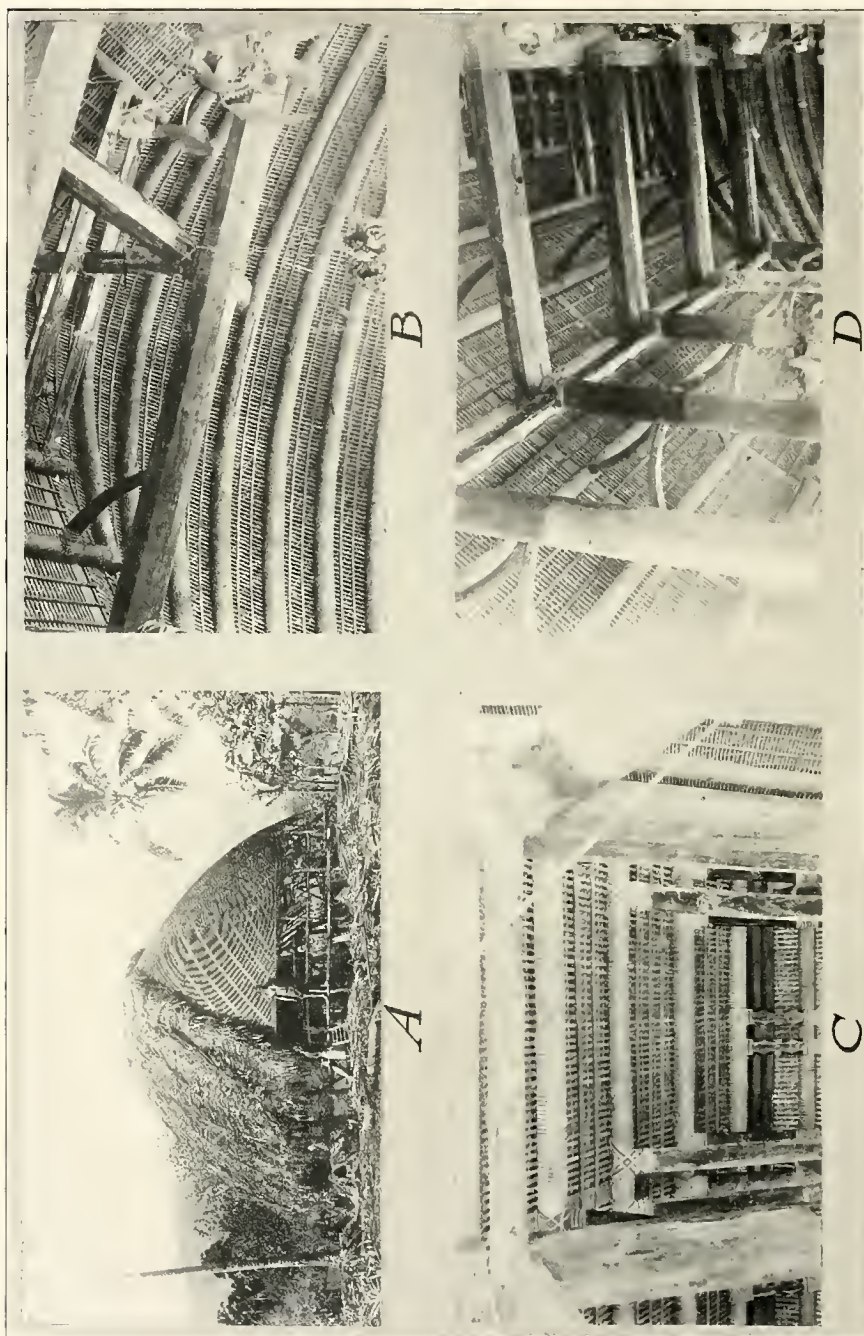
- A.* Designs on the front of the body: *a*, faa ulu tau, fishing spear; *b*, aso faa ifo, lines tied together; *b*, center, puke (on the navel); *c*, kafangi; *d*, aso, lines; *e*, aso; *d-f*, center-pungialo, a white sea bird; *f* and *g*, sai muku, short line; *h*, atua loa, centipede; *i* center, selu, comb; *j* center, faa lava; *j*, kapulu. (From drawings by the author.)
- B.* Designs on the back of the body: *a*, faa ulu tau, fishing spear (the points of these spears are to be seen in Plate VI A, *a*; *b*, vaa, canoe; *c*, faa ila, glass to look through (as into the sea for fish); *d* center, pea, flying fox; *e*, aso, lines; *f*, kafangi; *g*, aso; *h*, aso; *i* and *j*, sai muku, short line; *k*, atua loa, literally long god, the centipede; *l*, faa ila; *j-m*, aso tali tu; *n*, faa ila; *j-m*, center, ivi muku, short bone; *o*, kapulu; *p*, faa muli ali au, a sea-shell; *q*, fusi, belt. (From drawings by the author.)

## PLATE VII.—SAMOAN TATTOOING.

- A.* Photograph of a tufunga (professional) practising the art of tatau.
- B.* Motives used in tatau: *a*, on the legs of women; *b*, on the hands of women; *c*, 1, a section of the pattern called aso tali tu of a "talking man;" *c*, 2, the aso tali tu which distinguishes a chief of Fasitoo Uta. (*a*, *b*, drawn from observations, corroborated by Kramer's *Die Samoan Inseln*, Band II, pp. 71-87, 1903; *c*, drawn from life by the author.)

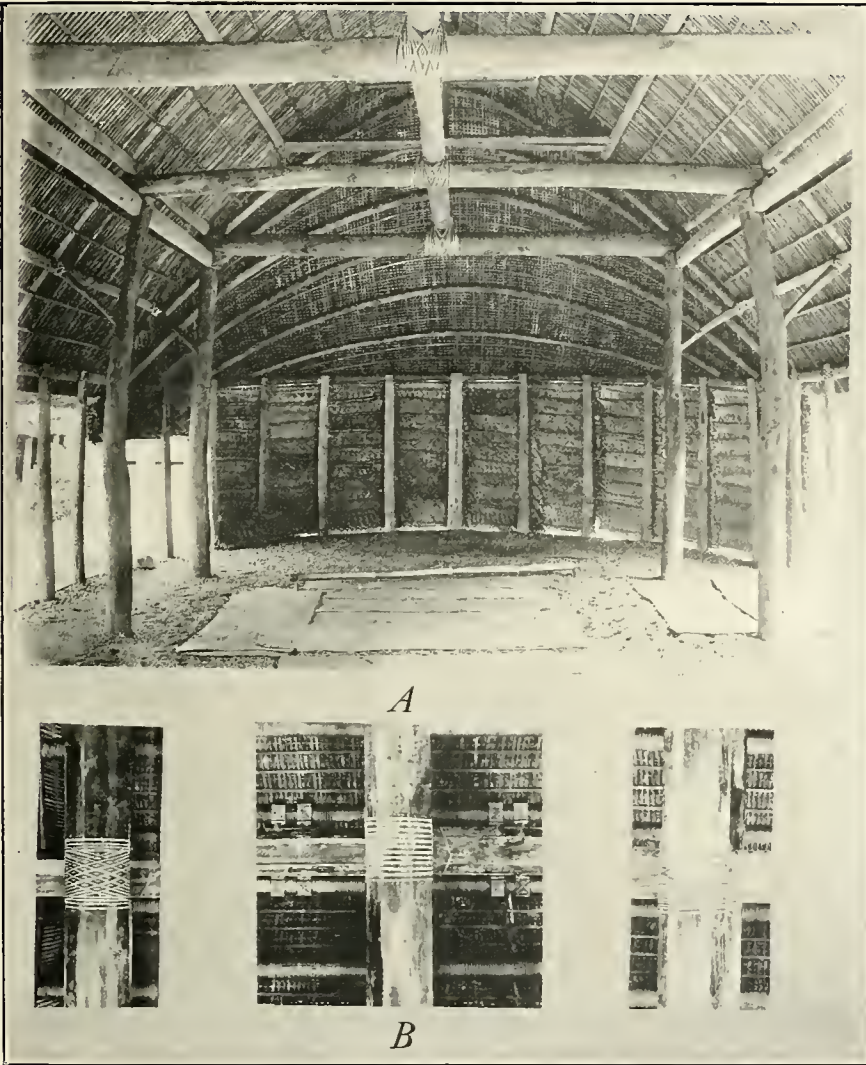


SAMOAN HOUSE FORMS

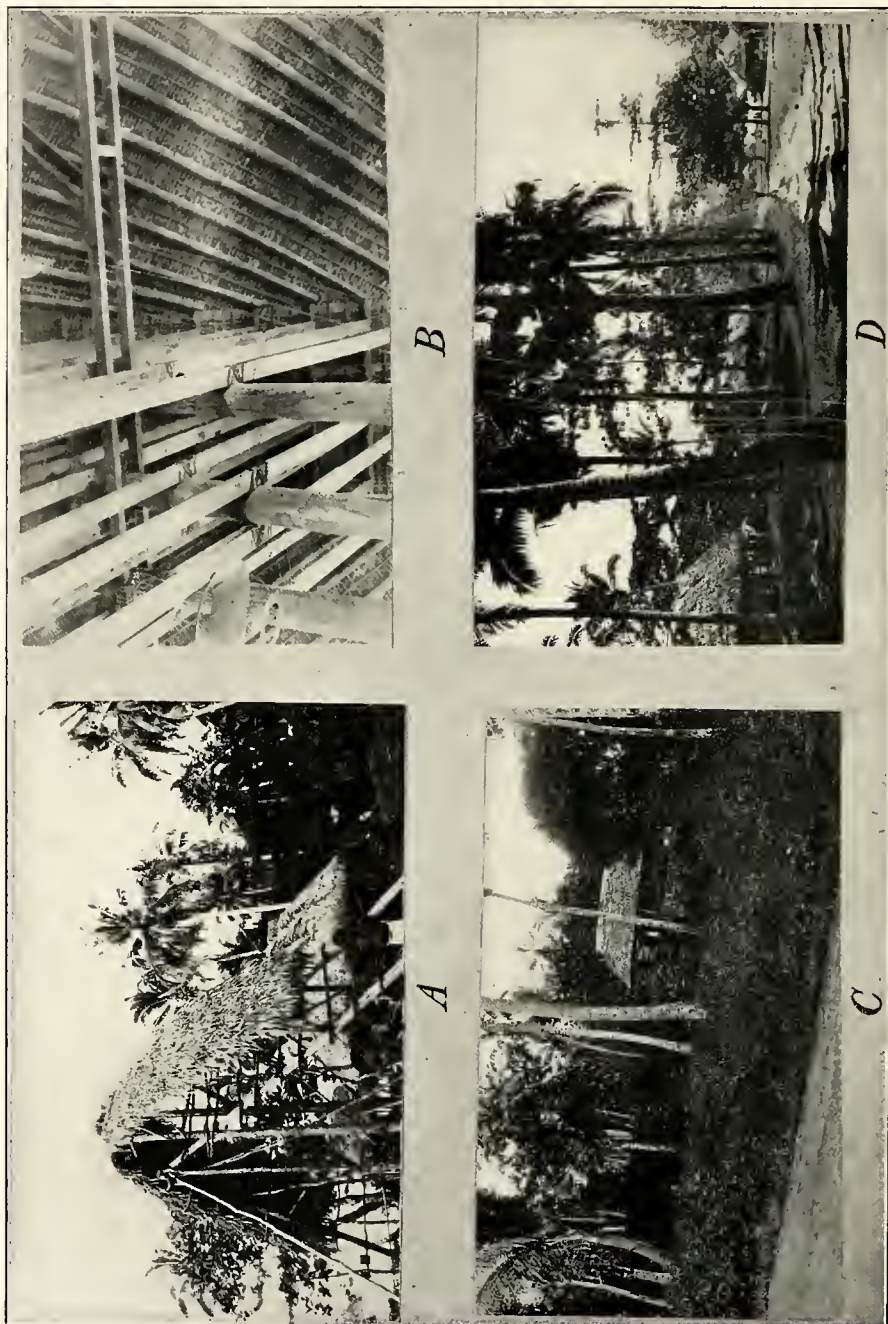


DETAILS OF CONSTRUCTION, LONG HOUSE



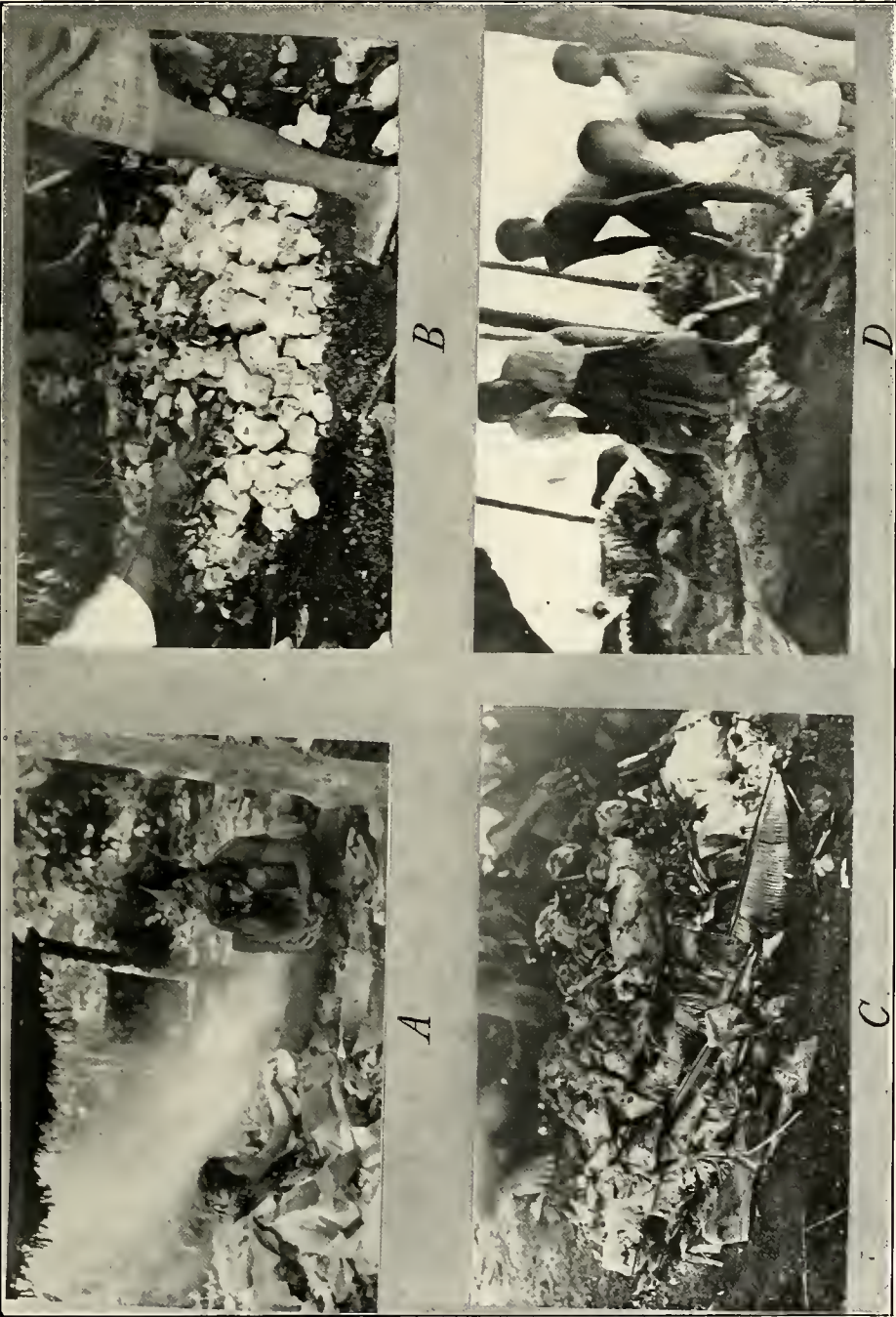


INTERIOR VIEWS OF LONG HOUSE

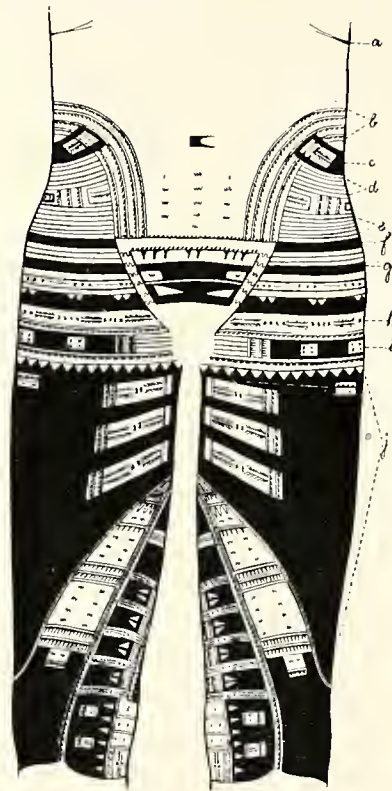


SAMOAN ROUND HOUSE AND GENERAL VIEWS





SAMOAN COOKING



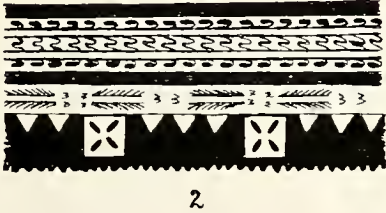
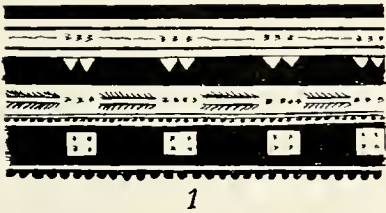
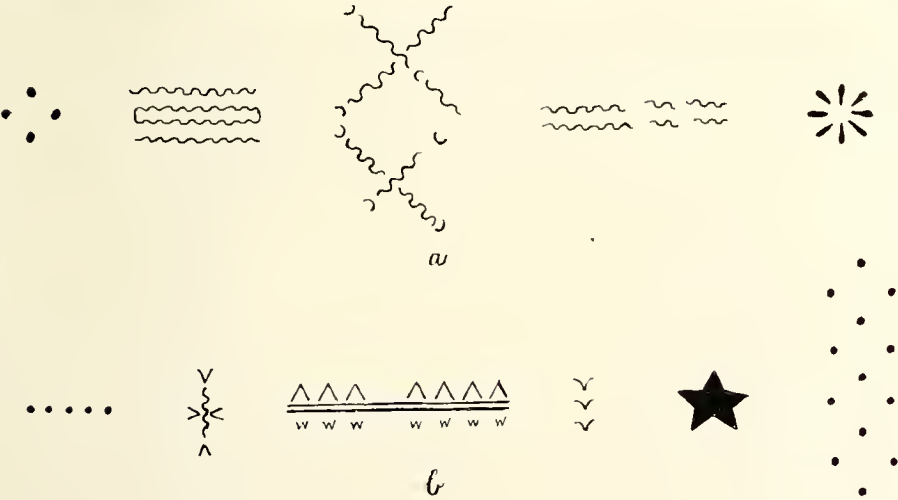
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SAMOAN TATTOOING DESIGNS





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